



March 6, 2017

Chairman Lodge
Senate Judiciary & Rules Committee

RE: H146

Dear Chairman Lodge,

The Idaho Coalition enthusiastically supports H146. Across the nation, we know that 1 out of every 6 women has been the victim of an attempted or completed rape in her lifetime. About 3% of men, or 1 in 33 men, have also experienced and attempted or completed rape in their lifetime. Sixty-six percent of these victims are between the ages of 12-17.

Of the thousands of rapes that occur in the United States, an estimated 30% are reported to law enforcement. Victims choose not to report for numerous reasons, unfortunately the most prevalent reason is because they fear society and the criminal justice system will not believe them. In our society today, we are quick to blame victims and slow to hold offenders accountable. We also know victims of sexual assault experience an immense amount of trauma. Research shows that victims of sexual assault experience the same level of PTSP or higher levels of PTSD as combat veterans.

H146 takes into account the immense amount of trauma and victimization experienced by a rape survivor. When a victim reports a sexual assault, forensic DNA kits or "rape kits" are collected at a medical facility or another entity, typically by trained Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners. The grueling process of evidence collection lasts 4-6 hours and is extremely traumatizing for victims. It is essential that the evidence collected is preserved accordingly and not destroyed without notification to a victim.

The time frames that have been added to this bill take into account the trauma that victims experience. It allows for notification to be given to victims when their rape kit is going to be destroyed. It sets parameters for kits collected anonymously to be kept for 55 years before they are destroyed. This 55 year timeframe takes into account those situations where victims initially do not feel safe or able to submit the kit for testing and allows for them to come forward at some time in the future to go forward with the case. In cases where law enforcement believes no crime has been committed, the kit will be held for 10 years. Although we have made significant progress in our understanding and investigation of sexual assault, this 10 year time period allows for the chance that new evidence may come to light in the case.

From a victim advocacy standpoint, H146 allows victims of sexual assault the respect and notification they so justly deserve. As someone who has dedicated the last 20 years providing advocacy for victims of sexual assault, I was proud to be a part of this committee and the Idaho Coalition enthusiastically supports this bill. We encourage you to pass H146.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Landhuis
Director of Social Change

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